Gc
977.802
In2n

Gc
977.802
In2n
1628925

M. L.

REYNOLDS HISTORICAL
GENEALOGY COLLECTION

Gc

ALLEN COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

3 1833 01064 4976

A STOUT Heart And A STRONG Faith

A History of

THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Independence, Missouri

1841 - 1961

A History of
THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Independence, Missouri

1841 - 1961

By Harry R. Nelson

Cover Sketch by Mary Willis

And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.—Acts 16:5

A STOUT heart and a STRONG faith were needed to inspire the missionary who visited the little frontier village of Independence in 1829. Less than a dozen log buildings, mostly of one or two rooms, comprised the small town on the hill, among the big oak and walnut trees. The old Indian trail between the Osages, over at Ft. Sibley, still passed by the spring at the foot of the hill and headed southwest toward the half dozen Indian tribes living beyond the border. The main enterprise was in the three trading posts, where in addition to a plentiful supply of whiskey, at 50c a gallon, guns, powder and hunting supplies were dispensed to trappers, hunters, traders and Indians, who formed about as unwholesome a group of human beings as to be found anywhere. Drinking and brawling through the days and nights, was the leading entertainment. In addition to the taverns, the town boasted three blacksmith shops, a two room log Courthouse, for dispensing frontier justice, and a U.S. Post Office believed to be farthest west of any in the new state of Missouri.

Such was the Independence to which the first gospel message of the Calvinistic brand, was brought by the Rev. N. B. Dodge. Born in Winchester, N. H. in 1781, Nathenial Brown Dodge, a veteran of the War of 1812, ordained by the Congregational Council of Vermont in 1816, was approaching forty when, in New York City, he organized the American Home Mission Society. This, a cooperative organization supported by the Presbyterian, Dutch Reformed and Associated Reform Churches, financed by a group of hardy souls who, with their wives and children, 41 in all set out to carry the Christian message to the Osage Indians. Overland to Pittsburg, by keel boat down the Ohio, up the Mississippi, the Missouri and the Osage rivers, to the head of navigation on that stream, near the French trading post of Papinsville, after five months of travel came this little band of missionaries, in 1821. N. B. Dodge was the leader and the founder of Harmony Mission (some 10 miles east of the present town of Rich Hill). It was doubtless during his visits to the nearest and only post office in Western Missouri, that he held religious services in the little log village of Independence. No doubt the need for the gospel message was far greater than the demand.

1628925

In 1831 the American Home Mission Society commissioned the Rev. Benton Pixley, who had been a co-worker with Dodge at Harmony, to be a Missionary at large to the whites of this region. The records are silent as to the activities of Mr. Pixley. Concerning

him as a writer in the Presbyterian Reporter for Feb. 1858 (p 174) it says "I find no report of him in the "Home Missionary" and have not been able to hear from him through correspondence". It is altogether probable that his stay was for a few months only, and that no permanent traces have been left behind. Independence has proved a hard field to all who have attempted to cultivate it. No missionary has remained there long from Mr. Pixley to this day." A Baptist Church had already been organized the previous year, 1830, near Ft Sibley (Ft. Osage) and has the distinction of being the first Church in Jackson County. Two years later the Cumberland Presbyterians built the first Church at Independence. It was in this same year, 1832 that the Mormons first entered Jackson County, hoping to practice their beliefs here, without persecution. In scarcely more than a year their number had reached 1500.

UNRAVELING A TANGLED SKEIN

In his history of the Kansas City Presbytery, published in 1901. Rev. John B. Hill, in the Chapter on The Church of Independence states "No full history of this Church has ever been written. Owing to its age and the many unusual features of its history, the present writer, belonging to a younger generation and personally unacquainted with the facts, hesitates to undertake to unravel the tangled skein".

A sketch of the Church which appears in the Presbyterian Magazine of October 1896 (p 19) says: "This city is rich in Historic lore. Its annals are an epitome of the stirring scenes of Western civilization from 1821 to 1861; of the horrors of border war 1861-65; of the confusion and anamosities of the unreconstructed forces which met here from 1865-1871, and the wonderful progress of the West in the last quarter of a Century".

Meanwhile, during the thirties the little village continued to grow, doubled and re-doubled its population and for a time became the mecca of the homeseeker, the trader, the adventurer and the "jumping off place" of the traveler. Here in 1832 came Washington Irving, after nine days on horseback from St. Louis. He stayed at the Noland House, the young city's leading hotel. Six and eight kinds of meat and game appeared daily on the menu along with the abundance of vegetables and desserts which such a rich land provided. Meals were higher than at the taverns, the price being two bits (25 cents to you) and lodging for the night was in proportion. If crowded the men guests slept crossways, four to the bed and the charge was four bits or fifty cents apiece.

INDEPENDENCE CHURCH ORGANIZED NOVEMBER 21, 1841

It was not until November 21st, 1841 that the Presbyterian Church of Independence was organized. On that date the Rev. John Lapsley Yantis came to Independence from Lexington, an occasion memorable to all interested in the history of our Church. From this date on we have the session minutes, except for the Civil War period. Written in a clear, beautiful hand by C. W. Boyers, Clerk, these first minutes are as follows:

"On Sabbath the 21st day of November A.D. 1841 Bro. John L. Yantis, in obediance to the directions of the Presbytery of Missouri preached in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church of this place, and announced at the close of the public service, that he had come with instructions to organize in this place a CHURCH in connexion with the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, if the way was clear, and requested all who were interested in the subject to meet him at the house of James Patton at 3: P.M."

"At the appointed time a number of persons assembled and the services were introduced with singing and prayer. The object of the meeting was then stated by Bro. Yantis, and all who were disposed to become members of a Presbyterian Church in this place were requested to signify their desire in an appropriate manner."

"The following persons who had been members of the Presbyterian Church, but who were without the proper certificates, or whose certificates were dated more than a year ago were examined by Bro. Yantis assisted by Bro. Arthur G. Young, a Ruling Elder of the Church at Lexington:

James Patton
Joseph O. Boggs
Cincannatis W. Boyers
Mrs. Mary Patton
Mrs. Sarah Irwin
Mrs. Henrietta Mener
Mrs. Elizabeth Lee

"The following persons were received upon profession of faith for the first time:

Miss Nanny M. Patton
Mrs. Phoebe Boggs

"The Church, thus organized, requested to be taken under the care of the Presbytery, as the Presbyterian Church of Independence.

"After sermon at the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in the evening: Lilburn Wickliffe, infant son of Joseph O. and Phoebe Boggs was dedicated to God by Baptism.

C. W. Boyers, Clerk
Independence, Mo., Nov. 21st, 1841."

So began the little church on the frontier. It is interesting to note that of the nine charter members, two thirds were women, a proportion which, from appearances still holds good in the modern church.

John Lapsley Yantis, who conducted this first service and ordination was born Sept. 14, 1804 in Lancaster, Kentucky, the son of Col. John Yantis and Priscilla Lapsley. After first studying medicine, he turned to the study of theology under the Rev. Robert A. Lapsley, D. D. Licensed to preach in 1829, he was ordained the following year and in 1833-35 was a stated supply at Liberty and acted on a similar commission at Columbia in 1836. We also find him as Register of the U.S. Land Office at Liberty in 1845 and as a teacher at Sweet Springs in 1849. In 1852 he made a trip to Oregon, but in 1859 we find him president of Richmond College. In the same year he was appointed as a Supply to the Church in Danville, Ky. It was also in '59 that he received his D.D. from Center College at that place. In 1861 he returned to Missouri, apparently living at Lexington.

We hear nothing of him during the War years, but from 1865-66 he appears as a supply to the First Kansas City Church. Somewhere during this active life he married Eliza Ann Markham. He passed to his reward on May 25, 1882 at Lexington, Mo.

SLOW BUT DETERMINED BEGINNING

It was almost a year after its formation when, on Nov. 4, 1842 the Church in Independence—"In accordance with an appointment previously made, a meeting of the members of the Presbyterian Church was held at the home of James Patton of Independence for the purpose of concluding the organization of the church already commenced. Present from a distance: Rev. Artemas Bullard of St. Louis and Rev. George M. Crawford of Lafayette County. The meeting was opened with prayer by the Rev. Bullard. On the motion of Mr. Bullard, Mr. Crawford was called to the chair."

"On the motion of Mr. Patton the sense of the meeting was taken upon the question of organization which was unanimously assented to.

"On the motion of Mr. Bullard an election was then held for the two Ruling Elders, which resulted in the choice of C. W. Boyers and Joseph O. Boggs.

It was then resolved "That the public ordination of the Elders take place tomorrow (Sabbath) morning at 11 o'clock A.M. Dr. Joseph L. Maxwell, Andrew L. Patterson and Mrs. Nancy Patterson, who were satisfactorily known to have been members in good standing in other places were admitted here to the privileges of the Church.

"Mrs. Elizabeth Ann Parker was admitted on profession of faith, for the first time".

"At a meeting for public worship on Sabbath the 5th of November, 1842, the public ordination of the Elders took place after the manner presented in the Confession of Faith, Rev. A. Bullard officiating. The members then publicly adopted the Confession of Faith, and entered into a Church Covenant according to the form used in the First Presbyterian Church in St. Louis.

"After sermon, the Lord's Supper was administered. Members and witnesses deeply effected serious inquiry for Salvation made by sinners."

"At the close of the evening service Mrs. Margaret A. Boyers was received on Profession of Faith for the first time.

C. W. Boyers, Clerk"

So after a painfully slow start the Church of Independence at least began to gain momentum. Small in numbers though it undoubtedly was, its members apparently were strong in the Faith of their Fathers and as the minutes tell us, concerned in their "inquiry for Salvation."

DIFFERENCES OVER CHURCH DOCTRINES

Much had been happening in the little village on the frontier during this period. The great controversy among Presbyterians over matters of Church doctrines and practices, which rocked the church to its foundations, finally crossed the Mississippi and reached the western limits. Seemingly futile to those of us today was the struggle which split the Congregations into two churches known as the "Old School" and the "New School". Each were sure they were right and even the civil courts were resorted to settle their disputes. Evidently the pot was boiling here too, for at a session meeting held Feb. 11, 1843 at the home of James Patton it was resolved that:

"We consider ourselves now, as heretofore, attached to the Old School Presbytery of Mo. And that we do not ourselves think, or

desire others to do so, that by our new organization, we thereby withdraw ourselves from under its care and protection." This was adopted by a vote of eleven to three.

It was likewise resolved: "That notwithstanding our connections with the Old School Presbytery of Mo. the services of Rev. Reed Wilkinson, will nevertheless, be acceptable as long as he desires to remain with us." Just who the Rev. Reed Wilkinson was, or how long he remained seems lost in the past. Also of interest is the fact that these session minutes were signed by "John McCoy, Sec. P.T." The Church was to benefit by the efforts of John McCoy for sixty years of active service.

In February of this same year, another session meeting was held with the moderator, a Rev. Alex R. Curry of the Muhlenburg Presbytery. As no further mention is made of him, he was evidently in Independence on some temporary mission. At each of these session meetings, several new members were received, indicating a steady though not phonomenal growth of the little Church. All was far from harmonious, however, for at a session meeting held Feb. 19, 1844, Rev. J. L. Yantis, Moderator,

"The following preamble and resolution was adopted—

"Whereas it has come to the knowledge of the session that the following members have gone out from us and aided in the organizing of another body unknown to our constitution (then the seven members by name) therefore resolved—that their names be stricken from our roll, and that we are no longer responsible for their acts."

The loss of the seven members named including Joseph and Phoebe Boggs, charter members, must have been a severe blow. From the church history by John B. Hill we learn that: "The division into the Old School and the New School having now been begun in this State, the Independence Church sided with the Old School. A new School organization was soon effected by Ministers Blatchford and Lord. The younger organization started out the better and built a brick house of worship.

At the beginning it was supplied by the Rev. Charles Lord. He was followed by a Rev. F. R. Gray. The new Church, of the "New School" prospered from the start and according to the record did much good for several years until suddenly and unexpectedly its career was cut short. In a warehouse near the Church, was stored a number of barrels of gunpowder, belonging to some Santa Fe traders. The house caught fire and a fearful explosion took place, killing

one man and destroying some houses around it—in the number was the Church Building. It could not be used and the little congregation was unable to rebuild. There were some debts outstanding. Mr. Gray, the minister, soon left and although it was estimated that $500 would repair it, it was eventually sold and another and smaller church built on another lot. A remnant of four male and eight female members held on for awhile until further holding proved useless. The Baptists afterwards erected a church on this location, a building later used by the Westminster Presbyterian Church."

On October 6, 1844, the Old School Church services were held in the Methodist Church, with a sermon by the Rev. A. R. Curry, and in the session meeting which followed, three new members were received.

OTHER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES WERE ORGANIZED

Other Presbyterian Churches were being organized and were progressing. A Presbytery was held the following spring in Andrew County, for we find in the minutes of March 30th that George Buchanan who had for several years been clerk of the session, was appointed as a delegate to represent the Church of Independence. In October of this same year we find that a Presbytery was held in Independence, elder James Patton being appointed as a delegate. The Rev. J. L. Yantis who evidently was still living in Lexington, and Moderator of the Presbytery, appears occasionally in the minutes conducting services and presiding as Moderator, although in Feb. 1846 we find the little Church still without a pastor and holding their meetings in the home of James Patton. In the following month a sermon was preached by a "Bro. Donland", who possibly was one of the emigrants then beginning to pass through Independence in the great migration to the west.

Another Presbytery was held at Liberty in April 1846, to which James Patton, whose home had been used for so many services and session meetings, was appointed delegate. This was followed by another Presbytery in September of the same year at Prairie Church in Lafayette County, James Patton again representing Independence. Still without a pastor, a two service sabbath is the next meeting of note, which included sermons both morning and evening.

From 1845 to 1847 the records of the session appear at more frequent intervals sometimes less than a month apart. "On Saturday and Sabbath 6 & 7 March 1847, Bro. James M. C. Inskeep preached at the New Church". "On Nov. 12, 1847 a protracted meeting was

commenced in the 2nd Presbyterian Church in Independence, Rev. N. H. Hall of the Synod of Kentucky, on a visit to Missouri, as evangelist, officiating". In these same minutes we learn that: "On motion, resolved that the Rev. M. B. Price be invited to labor with us for six months and that he receive in addition to what the western Board of Missions may give him, the sum of one hundred and twenty-five dollars from the church.

"D. I. Caldwell and George W. Buchanan were appointed a committee to procure a suitable place to worship in."

When the six months term of the Rev. M. Branch Price expired the following spring his tenure was renewed by vote of the congregation and again he was voted the additional sum of $125 for the six months, as had been the previous arrangement. At the same congregational meeting "Brother Samuel M. Grant" was appointed delegate to Presbytery to convene at Platte City, April 6th, 1848 and David J. Caldwell alternate. In a foot-note we learn that the next Presbytery is to meet at Independence on Thursday, October 2nd. In these minutes we also learn that the Rev. M. B. Price was "Requested to visit Kentucky, as soon as convenient, for the purpose of soliciting aid for erecting a place of worship for this Church in Independence, Mo." From other sources we learn that the Rev. Mr. Price did go to Kentucky and that he died while there. Meanwhile, during his absence a Rev. Richard H. Allen had been elected as a supply pastor.

The first mention of the Rev. R. S. Symington who was stated supply from 1848 to 1852 and under whose pastorate the first church building was erected, is in the minutes of October 14, 1848, where he is named as the moderator of the session. How much more seriously membership in the church was taken is shown in the record where members whose conduct was not of the best were brought before the session for trial. In 1849 when things were booming with hundreds of "fortyniners" passing through, one good brother had a fight and was, after a hearing exonerated by the session, on the grounds of "self-defense".

Another brother apparently was too fond of the fifty cent a gallon whiskey sold at the taverns. After appearing before six different sessions, confessing his fault and asking forgiveness, he was finally excommunicated and dropped from the church rolls.

NEW CHURCH WAS BUILT IN 1849.

Strangely, no mention occurs in the minutes as to the new Church. We do know that it was built in 1849 at the corner of Osage

and Lexington. In the minutes of Nov. 25, 1850 we find that: "On motion, permission was granted to the session to meet in the basement story of the church for the present". This tallies with other reports that the church was of brick, two stories in height, with the lower floor being used for school purposes. In the very helpful notes on our church history prepared some years ago by Miss Susan Lowe, we find a copy of a letter written apparently about the turn of the century by Dr. Symington to the Rev. John B. Hill, who at that time prepared his history of the Kansas City Presbytery, including a chapter on the church in Independence.

Dr. Symington wrote: "In 1849 the Synod of Missouri met in Lexington, Lafayette County. The Home Mission Committee reported a vast field opening up in the western part of Missouri and Kansas Territory, of which Independence was the center. A new School Church had already been organized there and the Rev. R. F. Gray was laboring among them as Stated Supply. But there were a few Old School brethern residing there who did not cooperate with them.

"A short time previous to this, (1847) Rev. W. H. Hall from Kentucky and Dr. Yantis, then pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Lexington, Mo., held a meeting and gathered quite a congregation around them. When Synod met at Lexington, Brother Patton, one of the number, was sent to procure, if possible, a stated supply, or missionary to labor among them. Dr. Yantis proposed that I be sent to preach at Independence and in the regions beyond. The Missouri Presbytery, to which I belonged, met on the floor of the Synod, and I was transferred to the Presbytery of Lafayette, and by it, sent as a missionary to that field.

"At the next meeting of Lafayette Presbytery, a committee was appointed to organize a church at Independence, which was accordingly done. I was elected pastor. With no church, no Sabbath School, and an organization of only ten members, it was quite discouraging. When we met in the Old Court House, about three in each corner and one to lead the singing, standing by the judge's stand which was my pulpit, it was quite chilly. The following year we erected a large and elegant brick church and paid for it. Our membership now numbered sixty."

Evidently, from the numbers being received at each of the session meetings, held regularly now, the Church was growing rapidly, and as we know with the influx of western bound immigrants, the "gateway of the west" was also booming.

Apparently Presbytery had been paying the Rev. Mr. Symington

for the first three years of his ministry, for in the notes of Nov. 26, 1851, we read: "On motion it was resolved that, we invite Br. Symington to labor with us for six months from the first day of Nov. to the last of April and his salary to be at the rates of $300 per year, payable in quarterly installments, and that he labor only the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Sabbaths per month.

"On motion, Br. Farrer, it was resolved that a collection be taken up on the 2nd Sabbath in Dec. for the purpose of paying the incidental expenses of the church". Meanwhile Mr. Symington had moved on to other fields after leaving an outstanding imprint on the history of the early church. Born June 9, 1819 in Hanover, Indiana, Robert Smith Symington, was ordained in 1846, preached in Louisville in 1844, Anxvasse, Mo. 44-48 and was received by the Presbytery of Upper Missouri Oct. 11, 1849. After supplying the Churches of Independence, Six Mile, Pleasant Hill and Westport from '48-'52, and leaving this field he was with Westminister College '54-'60, principal of the Female Academy, Pleasant Hill '54-'56 and back to Kansas City, First Presbyterian '57-'60, Mexico '62-'67 and Pleasant Hill '67-'74. He died in Danville Colo. in 1901.

Following Mr. Symington, came the Rev. Wm. R. Fulton who was a Pennsylvanian by birth. He was only 24 years of age and was the supply for the churches of Independence and Six-Mile and apparently was only here for about a year, as we find that these churches were supplied from 1853-55 by Wm. Henry Pawling.

Born at Danville, Kentucky, Mr. Pawling was a graduate of Center College and Princeton. After approval of the congregation as of June 20, 1853, he was hired "for three Sabbaths in each month for twelve months". "From the first Sabbath in July AD 1853" "we promise to raise four hundred dollars for his support".

The little church was now growing stronger financially, as well as numerically, for on Oct. 16, 1853 a "Brother Cowan, Agent of the Synod of Missouri" preached on the subject of "Domestic Missions" and received an offering of $43.00 in the collection which followed.

THE REV. T. A. BRACKEN FIRST REGULARLY INSTALLED PASTOR

The Pawling ministry lasted only two years when ill health forced his resignation. He was succeeded in September 1855 by the Rev. Thomas A. Bracken, D.D. The first regularly installed pastor. Dr. Bracken remained at his post until he returned to Kentucky in 1863. This pastorate which endured through the terrible ordeals of the Border troubles was probably far from a happy one, but he is

reported to have rendered a very acceptable and useful ministry.

A Pennsylvanian by birth, ordained Oct. 14, 1848, by the Presbytery of Upper Missouri, Dr. Bracken was received by the Lafayette Presbytery at its organization at Independence in 1855. His pastorate was dissolved Oct. 6, 1866.

Session minutes were becoming less frequent during the late fifties, and related only to the acceptance of new members or the appointment of delegates to various Presbyteries.

One exception is found in the session minutes of Oct. 7, 1858 Two elders were appointed "to visit and confer" with a certain sister "on the subject of rumors derogatory to her Christian character". Then followed a motion: "Whereas, it is rumored that some of the members of this Church are in the habit of attending public balls, therefore "Resolved that we spare no effort to ascertain the truth of such rumor, with a view to subjecting such member or members to the discipline of the Church".

The first mention of the office of deacon is in the record of a congregational meeting held July 29th, 1860, whereby a "Brother Thomas J. Huggins, was elected to the office of Deacon" and "after sermon on Sabbath evening, the 11th of March, 1860, set apart and ordained to said office".

The last record made March 24, 1861 (only a few days before Ft. Sumpter) marks the apparent end of session meetings until October 1865 when the moderator of the Session was a "Rev. G. K. Scott". We have only our imagination to picture what the little First Presbyterian Church of Independence and its faithful members endured. Perhaps it is just as well that the curtain is drawn.

1865

Some six months after Appomatox a session meeting was held at the First Presbyterian Church of Independence. It was on an unrecorded date in October 1865. Interesting to note, the same two elders who were present at the last meeting in 1861, again represented the congregation. They were two very faithful members whose names appear year after year, Dr. A. Farrar and George W. Buchanan. A Rev. George K. Scott was moderator. Ten new members were received and the church was functioning again.

1866

Evidently the Rev. Mr. Scott filled the pulpit for a short time as we find him mentioned again as moderator at the meeting of Jan. 5th, 1866, and in August 1866 he was unanimously elected pastor

at a congregational meeting. On October 5th, of the same year we are told in the minutes that the church was without a pastor again, one of the elders being elected moderator. Five weeks later a Rev. George Sluter of St. Louis presided at a session.

1867

The following April 17, 1867, the Rev. Samuel H. Howe makes his appearance and was moderator at this and the meeting a month later, when fourteen new members were received. He had been elected pastor on this date, but his formal installation was delayed, a year, when at a congregational meeting on June 18, 1867, a resolution was adopted stating: in part, "That in our opinion the said Samuel H. Howe has been regularly elected pastor of this church and has accepted: and we regard him as such and consider no further action in the premises necessary". The name of the Rev. Howe appears regularly as moderator of the session meetings until September 1869, after which it is absent from the minutes.

AN INDEPENDENT CHURCH FOR MANY YEARS

This was the beginning of the First Church's unique and stalwart struggle as an independent church, which for 26 years remained unaffiliated with either the "northern" or "southern" Presbytery and by this wise and far-sighted action built a much stronger church than could have been possible had two churches been established, as was the case in hundreds of towns and cities where the hatreds and rancors of the recent civil strife, still separated Christians of the same denominational beliefs, from worshipping together.

It was at this time that the "old school" churches in Missouri were again divided by a controversy called the "Declaration and Testimony". The Independence church joined with the majority of Missouri Presbyterians accepting the Declaration and Testimony thereby supporting the Independent Synod of Missouri.

1870

In a meeting held on Feb. 24, 1870, the Rev. John Montgomery D.D. is mentioned as moderator of the session. Apparently he was never formerly employed as he is not mentioned but twice thereafter.

Rev. M. M. Fisher, D.D. we are told in the minutes of Sept 25, 1870, "commenced his labors with this church, as stated supply, for one year at a salary of fifteen hundred dollars, payable quarterly in advance. He was to remain until April 1871.

1872

An echo of the controversies which beset the Presbyterians of Missouri is in the minutes of Feb. 24, 1872 when "Mr. Benton M. Pixley was received on letter from 1st (assembly) Presbyterian Church, Independence, Mo. on dissolution thereof by the (Assembly) Presbytery of Lafayette". Apparently this marks the end of the "New School" Church, and the Mr. Pixley referred to is the one who some forty years before had been a missionary with the Harmony Mission in Bates County.

A YEAR OF DECISION

1874

In June of '74 the Rev. J. E. Wheeler, "commenced his labors with this church", the Rev. M. M. Fisher having resigned the previous April. The salary was again $1500, payable quarterly, "so long as he may supply the same". This year was also a "year of decision" for the Independence Church. It was at this time that the "Independent Synod" voted to join the U.S. or "Southern" Presbyterian Church. The Independence Church having members who were both Southern and Northern sympathizers, very wisely and courageously decided to join neither and remained independent for the next 26 years or until the year 1900 when the church joined the Kansas City Presbytery.

An explanation of the church stand written by Elder John N. Southern appears on a latter page.

1875-1885

From June 1875 until his last appearance at a session meeting, April 19, 1885, the Rev. J. E. Wheeler appeared to have conducted a very satisfactory pastorate. Session meetings had been held with regularity, new members being received at every session. On May 14th, his resignation was accepted and an elaborate expression of good wishes for his continued efforts in another field placed on record.

In less than two months his place was filled by Rev. Henry A. Nelson, D. D. from whom we have a letter written ten years later, when he was editor of the religious publication "The Church at Home and Abroad" in Philadelphia. In this letter he expresses his gratitude to the church for their vote of remembrance, received on his 75th birthday.

"I have often said" he writes, "that there is no portion of my life that I look back upon with more unallayed pleasure than the 14 months which I spent with you. I do not see how in that length of

time, you could have done more to make a pastor love you. I felt than and I have felt ever since that it would have been a privilege to spend all my remainder of earthly life with you, if the Master had not called me to a work which needed to be done here.

"It comforts me immensely to know that you remember me with such generous affection, and I fervently pray that God will enrich you all with his choicest blessings.

"Affectionately yours, H. A. Nelson".

Henry Addison Nelson, Born at Amherst Mass., Oct. 31, 1820, was a graduate of Hamilton and Auburn. He was ordained by the Presbytery of Cayuga, N. Y. in 1846. While in Independence he was also President of the Kansas City Ladies College which was conducted here for a few years, with varying degrees of success.

1886

An interesting item under date of July 12, 1886:

"The Presbytery of Upper Missouri of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, having agreed to contribute a certain amount of the salary of Rev. Wells, evangelist, for the Synod of Missouri of said church, it is ordered that we hereby appropriate fifty dollars to said purpose to be taken from the general funds of the Church."

At a meeting, Oct. 4, 1886, the city of Independence was divided into districts and each elder charged "to look after the membership of the Church and Congregation in his respective district by personal inquiry and interviews, giving such advice and making such suggestions and recommendations with reference to their spiritual welfare, and the welfare of the Church as he may think prudent and desirable." (Evidently elders were expected to work in those days.)

1887

At the next meeting it was unanimiously voted to place envelopes in the pews the following Sunday and that the congregation be asked to contribute to foreign missions.

THE REV. A. D. MADEIRA IS CALLED

A call was given on Feb. 5, 1887, to Rev. A. D. Madeira of New York, "To minister to this church as stated supply, and acting pastor until such time as the church by a Congregational meeting shall elect and secure a regular pastor. The salary to be at the rate of two thousand dollars per annum, payable quarterly."

A congregational meeting was called for March 26, 1887, the Rev. Madeira, moderating, in which it was asked: "That the sense

of such meeting be taken as to the sale of the lot on which the present building now stands, and the purchase of another lot for the new building". This marks the first move toward the building of our present church.

1890

No mention is made of the first services in the new church but many new members are being enrolled and in October 1890 a committee was appointed to propose a "Sabbath School Executive Committee" to serve with John McCoy for the purpose of securing greater efficiency. At the next meeting, mention is made of securing suitable books for the Sunday School work.

Permission was also granted for the Rev. George T. Hayes to use the auditorium for two evening lectures, upon his visit to missions in Syria, and to take up a voluntary collection for their aid. Another request for permission to lecture on foreign missions came from a Mr. Xenophon Ryland, who wished to aid the cause of foreign missions and take up a collection. Permission was granted but it was not carried unanimously, one elder dissenting.

1891

On December 8, 1891, we learn that the Sunday School committee reports that they are not ready with their recommendations. This is their second request for more time. Evidently committees moved just as slowly seventy years ago as they do today, and apparently the new church was giving some members the idea of exclusiveness for we find that a committee of one elder and two deacons has been appointed to consider "the sittings in the church". In the same report we learn that a committee has been appointed by the deacons "to canvass the congregation with a view of raising additional funds to pay its current and other expenses". This is the first mention we have had of any fund raising efforts.

1892

On April 6, we learn that "A paper was presented proposing to call a meeting of the congregation to assemble on Saturday the 25th instant at 3:00 p.m. in the Lecture room of the church for the purpose of considering the question of the ecclesiastical relations of this church." The first motion was lost but it was reconsidered for further action. This evidently was another attempt to join a presbytery.

A joint meeting of the session and the board of Deacons met on Oct. 8, 1892 and it was resolved to take up a special collection the following Sunday, for the purpose of buying hymn books for the

Sabbath School and the Prayer meetings. Another committee was appointed to look into "the matter of raising funds for the extinguishment of the church debt". Four days later the committee reported that the money could not be raised and asked to be discharged. Evidently the elders did not like to be in debt. One good brother made the motion that the entire congregation be assessed $10.00 each "ad valorum" and that those who paid be given a share of the church property. At that time no presbytery owned the property, as it does now, and this scheme was possible, but the motion lost. (Times were getting hard in the nineties and the good men were getting anxious about the mortgage.) At this same meeting a committee of three elders was appointed to raise $600 to pay the interest on the church debt. Another elder was appointed to sign a petition remonstrating against the grading and macadamizing of Pleasant street from Maple to Pacific. Evidently they preferred dust to debts, which is at least understandable.

Another resolution appears on Oct. 3, for a congregational meeting to be called for the consideration of Presbyterial relations. This resolution was, after some debate "tabled" and the affair referred to a committee of three. On Dec. 5th this committee reported that they desired further time. Their request was granted. (The Independence Church was still Independent) At this same meeting it was decided, after some debate, that the seats in the church were free and hereafter to be used by the first occupants, thereby making it evident that all Christians were equal before the Lord. (Evidently not all agreed with this and some churches still rent their pews.)

1893

Again on Jan. 10, 1893 a joint session of elders and deacons met to consider "Presbyterial Relations". They decided that it was "inexpedient at the present time" and adjourned.

A piano was needed for the Sunday School and on July 3, a committee was appointed to confer with a local music house.

Still another petition, from members of the congregation, for joining a Presbytery was rejected by the session, Sept. 25th on the grounds that its consideration "would endanger the peace, unity and prosperity of the church". The vote to sustain was three, while two were willing to consider it again. (The pot was apparently beginning to warm up.) The following Nov. 13th at another session meeting we learn that 153 members had signed a petition to join a Presbytery. The petition presented is a long one and well worded,

but still the session sidestepped the matter by referring it to a committee for consideration.

Six days later the session came back with a reply to this committee. It consists of six pages of ((foolscap of closely written) legal refutation, reviewing the Church history since 1841. However, there was a minority report, nearly as long, which shows that there was a division of opinion among the elders—a vote of three to two sustaining the relations then in existence.

None-the-less the session was fair, as Presbyterians always try to be, and a congregational meeting was called for Dec. 6, with 80 members present. After considerabe debate (as could be expected) the congregation finally voted by a vote of 61 to 14 to leave matters as they were until the congregation decided the matter themselves. Next they gave the session a vote of confidence and approval and adjourned.

REMAINED INDEPENDENT DESPITE WITHDRAWALS

1894

The Presbyterial pot was really boiling now. Another resolution on Feb. 4, uses several pages in an attempt by the session to pacify the unhappy members who were asking for closer union. This was of no avail, it seems, and on the 14th of the following June we learn that some of the members have already organized the Westminster Presbyterian Church and have petitioned the Presbytery of Upper Missouri, of the Presbyterian of the United States (Southern) to admit them to this Presbytery. In response the session gave them its blessing and although some 40 members had withdrawn, the church continued to be independent.

1895

With true Christian spirit, the auditorium was offered to the new church on April 5, in which the Lafayette Presbytery, with which they had become affiliated, were to hold their regular meeting on April 14th. The Westminister session however declined this offer, insisting that the hall they had selected would probably be adequate and if not that they had already accepted the offer of the Maple Ave. Methodist Church.

At the same session a Dr. Ayers was delegated to attend the meeting of the Kansas City Presbytery at Butler on April 14th and offer them the building and hospitality of the First Church of Independence, for their next meeting.

JOHN N. SOUTHERN WROTE BRIEF HISTORY

In the October 1896 issue of the Presbyterian Magazine an article by Elder John N. Southern appears giving a brief history of the church and the reasons for its independent stand for so many years. He writes:

"The First Presbyterian Church of Independence, Mo., was organized here Nov. 21st, 1841, by the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America, before that Church was vexed with the divisions which have since become historic. The church was ministered to by stated supplies up to 1855, when Rev. Thomas Bracken became the first pastor, continuing up to the summer of 1863, when his very acceptable and useful ministration was ended by the prevailing war troubles. Rev. George K. Scott supplied the pulpit in 1866. The Rev. Samuel N. Howe and Dr. John Montgomery respectively exercised the pastoral care over the congregation until 1868, when Rev. M. M. Fisher, D. D. took charge and continued with the church until 1874. From 1875 to 1885 the church was led by Rev. J. E. Wheeler, D.D., and from October, 1885, to Nov. 1886, by Rev. Henry A. Nelson, D. D., now the editor of 'Church at Home and Abroad'. On the first Sabbath in March 1887, Rev. A. D. Madeira, D.D. took charge of the church as acting pastor and continues to conduct its ministrations.

"When in 1866 the Synod of Missouri became independent, the church maintained its presbyterial and synodical identity unchanged in the Presbytery of Lafayette and the Synod of Missouri. But when the Presbytery of Lafayette in the spring of 1874 decided to take ecclesiastical connection with the Southern Assembly, the Independence church was not represented, nor has it been represented in presbytery or synod since that time. The presbytery left the church.

"In the early part of 1894 an effort was made by a part of the congregation to secure presbyterian relations, but in a meeting of the members called for conference with the session it was decided by a vote of 65 to 14 that we remain 'as we are until the congregation decide otherwise'. Subsequently forty of the members withdrew and organized the Westminster Presbyterian Church of Independence, Mo., now a young and prosperous church under the pastoral care of Rev. Franc Mitchell.

"The First Presbyterian Church numbers about 225 members under the pastoral direction of Rev. Dr. Madeira. Its church building is elegantly located and is the most sightly and commodious house of worship in the city. It was erected and equipped in 1888 at a cost of about $45,000, of which large sum the last payment has been re-

cently provided and the church is now free from debt. Adjoining the church is the parsonage.

"Under the auspices of this church, nearly a quarter of a century ago, was founded a school for the education of girls, which is now under the management of Rev. George F. Ayers, A.M. as president. The expenditure for grounds and buildings, heretofore borne almost entirely by members of the church, has been liberal indeed, but the demands upon the institution for the accommodation of its patrons are such as to require other expenditures, which will be made in additions this year. The value of the school investments of this church is estimated at $40,000.00 and it is expected that at the close of the administration of the estate of H. M. Vaile, under a bequest of the last will and testament of Mr. Vaile, property worth from $50,000 to $100,000.00 will be available for this school.

"Our church is all that is left of the Independent Synod of Missouri, and is waiting anxiously for the removal of the last vestiges of the ecclesiastical rupture of 1861, when its members, half of Northern and half of Southern principles, one in Christ, will together assume all the obligations of Presbyterianism.

"They hold, as the two synods of Missouri, the Northern at Fulton, and the Southern at Farmington, held in 1885, and as the General Assembly convened at Omaha held in 1885 that the causes for continual separation of the two bodies have been removed and the time for the union of the two churches has come. But the negotiations failed, and the Independence church was left to live awhile longer without presbyterial relations, awaiting the obliteration of the lines between North and South, and subordinating personal preferences and prejudices to the preservation of peace and unity in their congregation.

"Their house of worship has been opened to the courts of Lafayette and Kansas City presbyteries respectively, and the latter will hold its fall session here. The First Presbyterian Church yields to none in its fealty to Presbyterianism, and it stands for the unity of the general church (as it does for its own unity), as it existed when it was organized in 1841, never having by act or deed, line or precept, changed or sanctioned any of the changes that have befallen the general organization.

"In 1861 the General Assembly of the Confederate States of America, the Southern Assembly, was formed from withdrawing synods and presbyteries. In 1866 a new synod was formed from the old Synod of Missouri, at Boonville. In 1884 Lafayette Presbytery, to

which this church belonged, transferred itself to the Southern General Assembly. But the Independence Presbyterian Church has stood the same through all these changes. It does not send delegates to presbytery or synod, but stands ready to send them when presbyteries and synods shall restore that unity between themselves that existed when this church was organized and which it has so long maintained. To this consummation we wait and reverently pray."

AN UNUSUAL ARRANGEMENT

1899

A very peculiar arrangement was made with the pastor, at the meeting of March 8, 1899. After a report by the Board of Deacons showing that the deficiency in the expenses for the current year was the sum of $761.98, "It was resolved to terminate the contract held with Dr. Madeira, but that he be retained as stated supply and acting pastor of the church. He was to be paid with "the balance of the collection to be taken up weekly, remaining after the deduction of all necessary interest charges, on special tax bills if any, payable monthly and if such collections for any month be not sufficient to pay said current expenses, that same be paid out of the collections in the succeeding month or months."

There is no evidence that the good Doctor was happy with this arrangement, but he signed the new contract. Nevertheless we find his letter of resignation of Nov. 2, 1899, asking to be relieved and discharged on the 13th day of the following May. This ended a pastorate of approximately 13 years.

Action was finally taken after these years of independence, by a Congregational Meeting held on Dec. 13, 1899, Dr. Madeira moderating. Eighty-four of the congregation were present, 80 voted, with 58 for and 20 against. On the next ballot 63 voted to join the Kansas City Presbytery, 13 for affiliation with the Lafayette Presbytery. This vote was then made unanimous, and with the singing of the Doxology the matter was settled.

1900

At the next session meeting (April 4) Elder Edward P. Gates was delegated to attend the meeting of the Kansas City Presbytery, to be held at Tipton, Mo., April 10th and make formal application for the admission of the First Church to membership in that body. John N. Southern, alternate, attended along with Dr. Madeira who is listed as a member of the Lafayette Presbytery and was received as a "cor-

responding member". After a brief outline of the history of the Church and presentation of the application for admission by Mr. Southern, the church was accepted by unanimous vote. At this same meeting the Rev. William Carter, Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Kansas City was appointed to moderate the session of the First Church in Independence. The First Church of Independence was given permission to supply its own pulpit.

A Congregational meeting was next called for April 25th (1900) for the purpose of hiring a pastor. Dr. Madeira had asked that his name be presented along with the other candidates, there being some nine in all. After some balloting and the elimination of all the names except Dr. Madeira, the vote stood 69 for hiring him with 60 opposed. This was not sufficient endorsement for the Doctor to accept, so the Church was left without a minister.

DR. C. C. McGINLEY NEW PASTOR

1901

From May 6, 1900 until Jan. 27, 1901 the pulpit was filled with some 30 different ministers, each preaching a sermon night and morning and receiving an average of $15.00 for his services. This arrangement ended on Feb. 3, 1901 when "Dr. C. C. McGinley, having accepted the call, began his ministerial work and conducted services."

In a statistical report to the Presbytery for the year ending April 1, 1901 we learn that the next total of communicants was 203 and the average Sabbath School membership 150.

April 11, 1901 was the date of the formal installation of Dr. C. C. McGinley, who had come to Independence from the Church of Muskogee, Okla. Session meetings became more frequent with the advent of Dr. McGinley and new members were received at every session.

1902

A note of interest appears under the date of March 30, 1902 when application was made by letter by Dr. J. M. Spencer for "a hearing on educational topics in the interest of the Synodical Female College". On motion the application was laid over.

A statistical report at the close of what was then the church year (March 31) gives the net membership at 208, the Sabbath School 168.

For two weeks during April, evangelistic services were conducted by a Dr. J. E. Rogers of Springfield, Ill. Ten members were added

to the church rolls (names are now of persons in some instances related to the present generation).

The Church was not only growing in membership but new methods were appearing. In July, the Pastor, a member of the session and one of the women members were appointed as a committee on "church music". In that same month the pastor was voted a vacation. A short time later it was voted that no entertainments be held in the Church, unless approved by the Pastor. Apparently some of the young people were getting a bit frivolous.

The Probate Court of Jasper County, Missouri notified the session that Mr. John H. Taylor deceased had devised "certain property to this church".

It was also decided on motion, to dispense with Church services on the evening of Dec. 14th, "that those who desire to do so may attend the evangelistic services to be held in Kansas City on that day".

Upon date of Dec. 7, 1902 we find "On motion it was resolved that the session will acquiesce in any arrangement made by the Pastor and deacons as to the services connected with the proposed dedication of the church. (As the church was then 15 years old it seems as though this was action a bit delayed).

At several meetings, discussions regarding the purchase of new hymnals are reported. It appears that the Deacons found it difficult to raise the money at this time. Elders who had under their supervision the various "divisions" in which the city had been divided, report on the welfare of their charges.

The pastor was finally authorized (Aug. 7) to purchase 160 hymnals in the "half leather" edition. It was also voted to elect the officers and teachers of the Sabbath School annually.

1905

Little besides routine business is reported during the year 1905 except that on July 2 the session refused to give a letter of dismissal to a member wishing to leave and join a Church of Christ Scientist on the grounds that it had no authority to dismiss a member to an "unevangelical organization". She was asked to meet with the session for a discussion but instead wrote the session that her mind was fully made up to the effect that the "Christian Science was the better way". The session voted to drop her name for the Church rolls.

1906-1907

Continued growth under Dr. McGinley is evidenced by the statistics for the beginning of the Church year in 1906 when the net

membership is given at 289 while the Sabbath Sch[illegible] The following year, 1907, shows a gain of 21 member[illegible] of 207 for the school. In that year the ladies of the [illegible]sted that the session allow the use of individual cups [illegible]tal occasions". The request was granted and the age old [illegible] communion cups used in common, was abandoned.

1909

At a meeting in May 1909 it was decided "to recommend to the congregation the raising of $1000 for benevolences. A plan was also considered for Church Federation for Greater Kansas City".

In June of the same year, Missouri Valley College at Marshall. Mo. conferred the degree of Doctor of Divinity on the pastor, C. C. McGinley. A report from the building committee regarding the purchase of a Manse was presented to the session in October of tihs same year. No action was taken. A report from the Pastor states that between the years 1904 - 1909 contributions to Home Missions amounted to $1762, and to Foreign Mission $1949.

In welcoming a member into the fellowship of the Church on Dec. 5, 1909 we find the statement that the Westminster Church has been "disbanded". Quite a number from that church had already been received during the previous months.

1910

The beginning of the Church year (April 1) shows a decided increase in the Sunday School enrollment, reaching a total of 231. The active members of the church, 330.

Another landmark in the progress of the church is a congregational meeting held to discuss union with the Liberty Street Presbyterian Church (June 19, 1910). The movement was endorsed by a unanimous vote.

During this same period several references are made to evangelistic services being held with the assistance of various ministers from Kansas City.

1912

All six of the deacons resigned on April 7, 1912 and at a congregational meeting on April 28, the "rotary system" was adopted and six members elected to serve terms of one, two and three years. On the evenings of June 4 and 5 of the same year the Anti-Saloon League was invited to hold meetings in the church.

A committee of two elders was appointed at the Session meeting to look up the old records of the church. Evidently they were

successful as these books have been used in preparing these present notes.

A resolution appears on November 3 directing the pastor and one elder to spend one day each week visiting the sick. They are also instructed by a resolution to prepare a list and call on those (in alphabetical order) who have not been attending church regularly.

1913

Early in 1913 (Jan. 13), a series of meetings was conducted by Dr. W. R. Dobyns of St. Joseph. It is not made clear whether or not Dr. Dobyns was a regular evangelist. Two cottage prayer meetings were to be held in each ward in preparation for these services. It was also decided to hold two meetings daily for the week of these services at 8 a.m. and 7:45 p.m.

At the next meeting Feb. 2, committees were appointed to consider the "boy problem" and the "girls problem" as "they relate to the young people of the congregation. Evidently young people were "going modern" if not "steady" forty seven years ago.

Cards had been sent out to members inquiring as to whether or not family altars were in use in the home. Fifty cards were returned by members who agreed to try to adopt some form of daily worship. Quite a few reported that they had been holding family services for years (minutes of March 2, 1913).

The membership is now 343, with the Sunday School registering 150 (April 1). On this same date it was voted to call a congregational meeting to vote upon whether or not the church should place a missionary in the foreign field as its representative. This meeting was duly held a week later and by unanimous vote the congregation agreed, to raise a fund for the salary, to be called the "Fannie McCoy Missionary Fund" and that this undertaking be conducted for a period of three years. Pledges were taken for the first year and the Rev. John W. Creighton recommended as the missionary.

CUMBERLAND MEMBERS JOIN WITH FIRST CHURCH

June 29, 1913, was a momentous day in the history of the church, as on this date the members of the Liberty Street Presbyterian Church (Cumberland) joined with the First Church, after three years of discussion. This merger marked the disbanding of the smaller church and the addition of many strong and active members to the First. In all 138 were received and quite a few of them are still actively participating in the work of the church.

The movement started by the deacons, for rotating members in office was adopted by the session in their meeting of Oct. 11, and ratified at a congregational meeting a week later. There were to be twelve elders and nine deacons. Four each for one, and three years succeeded the old system where some elders had served continuously for half a century. Modern trends are beginning to show up in the larger church, as we find a committee of elders being appointed to procure a place for a basketball court for the use of the young people of the church (Nov. 17).

1914

The total membership at the beginning of the church year 1914 was 497. Sunday School 256.

After a pastorate of 13 years Dr. C. C. McGinley submitted his resignation to take effect Sept. 1st. Those who knew Dr. McGinley in his later years feel that this action must have been received with considerable regret. Dr. McGinley resigned to become superintendent of Home Missions for the State of Missouri. One month after Dr. McGinley's resignation, on Nov. 1st, the Rev. A. G. Pearson of Kansas City was employed to fill the pulpit and conduct the weekly prayer meetings until Jan. 1, 1914 "compensation to be $25.00 per week." At several session meetings during the year, mention was made of the efforts of the Christian Science Church to lease the Liberty Ave. building. Their offer was rejected on the basis that this was a non-evangelistic church.

1915

With the coming of the new year efforts were being made to fill the vacant pulpit. A Dr. A. V. Bishop of Austin, Texas was recommended. At a congregational meeting held March 14, A Rev. Thomas A. Stamp was considered at a salary of $2000. The vote was 88 to 57. He did not accept.

THE REV. A. G. PEARSON NEW PASTOR

A congregational meeting was held, instead of the church service, on April 15th and the Rev. Arthur G. Pearson was unanimously elected to fill the position of pastor at a salary of $2000 per annum with the free use of the manse and an anual vacation of four weeks. He was installed on May 30, at which time five ministers from Presbytery and elsewhere took part; Dr. McGinley being present.

At one of the meetings in June, church bulletins were authorized.

a committee appointed to arrange for an office for the pastor and a pulpit Bible accepted from Dr. G. T. Ware.

A Dr. S. T. Davis was invited to fill the pulpit on Sept. 26th, subject, Foreign Missions "China especially".

On October 8th, Wm. N. Southern was appointed a delegate to Omaha on the "Billy Sunday" train, the church to pay expenses not to exceed $15.00.

1916

The membership beginning with the church year 1916 totaled 445, Sunday School 347. The budget adopted at the annual congregational meeting reached a total of $7,725. At this same meeting a vote of appreciation voicing "our love and respect" was tendered the pastor Rev. Pearson.

June 1916 was the month in which the Billy Sunday campaign was held in Kansas City. Among those who "hit the sawdust trail" and signified their desire to join the First Presbyterian Church of Independence were seven who were received on June 5th. On June 24th, 41 more were received.

From the minutes of December 1, we learn that the Christian Science congregation has been given notice to vacate the liberty Street Church building and that they have agreed to do so. We also learn that the Elks have been given permission to hold their annual Memorial Services in the First Church, Dec. 30th at 2:30 p.m. At the next meeting we find that the Primary and Junior Departments of the Sunday School are to use ungraded lessons.

1917

On Jan. 12th the "gospel Team", an organization of men of the Church asked for and were granted use of the Liberty Street Church building in which are to be held entertainments of a "social and religious nature" for the benefit of the young people of the church. They also submitted a report of their meetings at various small churches throughout the county with a total of 19 conversions to their credit.

On March 15th a copy of the annual budget appears. A total of $9,975 is proposed including a pastoral salary of $2500 with the janitor receiving $365 and the organist $360. At the congregational meeting it was adopted.

The membership for the year had also increased by 109 members bringing the net total to 554. The Sabbath School was also growing, there now being 311 members including the teachers. Contributions

to Home and Foreign Missions had totaled $1948 beside $800 salary to the Church missionary in China.

The first Sunday in May was, upon motion of the session set apart as "Mothers Day". "The services to be along the line of motherhood and each mother to be given a "carnation". This is the first mention of Mother's Day in the minutes.

During the years of World War I the minutes are very brief and deal mostly with the routine of receiving new members and granting letters of dismissal.

On August 12 is the first notice that a war is going on with mention of a "farewell service" for the "Battery Boys" in the Lewis Garden. Twenty New Testaments were given the "Army Boys" connected with the church.

A publication called the "Continent" is asked to deny a published statement that the Rev. A. G. Pearson has suffered a nervous breakdown and will be compelled to give up his work. A two weeks leave of absence was granted Dr. Pearson on October 5th. Then, at a called meeting held Oct. 22, a resolution was sent Dr. Pearson congratulating him and expressing "deepest gratification at the prospects of your restored health and early return to your pastorate".

1918

At the annual Congregational meeting held March 27th a budget of $10,640 was adopted and a net membership of 600 active members reported with 299 enrolled in the Sunday School.

On May 19th appears notice of a letter from Dr. G. P. Baity asking the church to buy a lot at Hollister, Mo., on what was later known as "Presbyterian Hill".

Another item, is that May 26th is to be observed as "Father's Day". At this same meeting it was voted to hold no Sunday evening service but to join the union meeting at the Baptist Church "To Make Missouri Dry".

During June the Pastor was granted two leaves of absence so that he might work with the soldiers in North Kansas City, under the auspices of the Y.M.C.A.

Reported at the session meeting of August 1, is a letter of resignation from Rev. A. G. Pearson asking to be relieved of his duties in September. It was accepted, subject to the action of the congregation. The congregational meeting, moderated by Rev. J. H. Miller of Kansas City, records that 36 members voted to accept Dr. Pearson's resignation with 64 voting "no". On the pastor's statement that he would not remain, his resignation was accepted by a vote of 88 to 5.

1919

Early in January, a report of the pulpit committee dated the 16th tells us that after diligent endeavor, they present the name of Sears F. Reipma for the consideration of the congregation to fill the vacancy at the pulpit. Dr. Reipma had been a pastor at Olathe, Kansas and was elected at a Congregational meeting held January 19th —salary $2760 per annum. The church year beginning April 1, opened with the same budget and approximately the same enrollments as on the year previous.

1920

A joint meeting of the elders and deacons was held in February, at which it was resolved to sell the church manse at 422 West Maple, price $6500.

A congregational meeting called on March 31, voted to raise the pastor's salary from $2760 to $3000, in "appreciation of his faithful service, and for his clear, helpful and inspiring exposition of the scriptures". This vote of approval was at the end of his first year of ministry.

1921

The New Year started by placing 130 names of members no longer attending church, many doubtless inactive for years, on the suspended roll.

An elder no longer attending church or session meetings came in for considerable discussion. Several attempts were apparently made by committees to get the good brother back in harness. No report as to the outcome.

Under date of March 7, a motion appears authorizing the sale of the Liberty Street Church for not less than $7000.

Clouds, heralding a gathering storm, appear in a motion instructing the clerk of the session to write Dr. G. P. Baity of Kansas City, requesting him to "give a full and complete report of the committee and the action of the Presbytery in regard to the dissatisfaction in this church". Nothing said as to the cause of this "dissatisfaction".

The answer appears on May 6th in the form of a full page report which the committee had given Presbytery. In this it is stated that an active minority in the church were objecting to the doctrines set forth by the pastor in his sermons. It was also made clear that the majority were sustaining the minister. The minority were urged to settle their differences or ask for membership in another church.

On Dec. 2, it was voted that the pastor, Dr. Sears F. Reipma, owing to his physical condition, be given a three months leave of absence on full pay.

Mention is made at this time of the fact that William H. Waggoner has bequeathed the church $2000.

1923

Evidently the manse did not sell at the earlier date reported for we find on August 13, that a sale has been concluded for $10,250.

1924

"Dr. Bleck and his singer" were authorized to hold a two weeks service beginning March 20.

A congregational meeting on March 26, voted to limit the cost of the "new addition" to $45,000. This was an increase of $5000 made in order to insure a "first class heating plant" and "put the organ in the best possible shape". This is the first mention in the minutes on the new Sunday School or educational building.

A month after the services held by Dr. Bleck and his "singer" appears a letter of the session signed by the pastor, thanking the Doctor for his "fine service".

Visitors are to be welcomed at the door each morning by a committee appointed for that purpose, decided after considerable discussion at the session meeting of May 2.

It was resolved that an inscription, "Go Ye and Teach" be inscribed above the door of the new educational building, (June 13).

At the next meeting a committee was charged with arranging to borrow $10,000 from the "Edward P. Gates Trust Fund" to be used in paying for the erection of the new addition to the church.

Mid-week prayer meetings which had been a part of Presbyterian services for generations, were suspended in August.

The Ott family, it was resolved, should be thanked for the Baptisimal Fount presented to the church as a memorial to Miss Rose Ott. (Oct. 9).

1925

The Board of Deacons were authorized at a congregational meeting, to execute a promissory note, secured by a deed of trust, in order to borrow $10,000 for finishing payments on the new educational building. (March 25).

1926

An attempt was again made to carry out the "Parish Plan", whereby each member of the session was to be responsible for a

certain area of the city assigned him. He was also to keep a report on absentees, illness among the members and their general welfare.

In August the pastor gave an outline of his work for the remainder of the year, including the text and an outline of each of his sermons.

A letter from Dr. J. W. McDonald, moderator of Presbytery, suggests that in order to get members to resume church attendance after the summer vacation, a "Home Coming Day" be held. (Sept. 3).

"Moved and carried, that we endorse the "Good Will" movement and cooperate in the sending of dolls to Japan". Kind not specified. (Oct. 1).

1927

The resignation of Dr. Sears F. Reipma was received and accepted August 21. He had already accepted a call to a church in Lincoln, Nebraska. This ended the long controversy within the church.

A financial report for the period of Jan. 1, to Sept. 1, shows a total expense for the eight months of $6,640 including a deficit of $303. The sum of $26,100 was still owing on the "new building".

DR. CRANSTON E. GODDARD TO PULPIT

A new pastor, Dr. Cranston Earl Goddard, of Sheffield, Ill., was accepted at a congregational meeting held on Nov. 6 Salary $3000, including $600 for manse.

1928

Fifty-five new members, 29 of them on confession of faith, were received into the fellowship of the church on Jan. 9. Three weeks later at a special meeting 133 names were placed on the reserve roll. Two Sundays later, 49 more new members were received.

A new high was reached with the annual budget,—$12,300. The active membership of the church is given at 684, Sunday School including teachers 325. More new members were added on April 8, 54 in all of which 20 were by letter.

At the close of the year "Ten Loyalty Goals" were adopted. These included better attendance and in increase in their pledges by the members. Incidentally, the year closed with a deficit of $2600.

1929

As a part of the "Loyalty Crusade" Dr. George G. Dowey was employed to carry on a two month's campaign for the purpose of raising money to pay off the $30,000 indebtedness on the Educational Building (Jan. 25).

Despite their indebtedness $50 was voted for the aid of a Korean student at Park College—one Chang Soo Kim.

The annual deficit had been reduced to $300 according to a report at a congregational meeting. At this same meeting the pastor was voted an increase in salary to $3600. The drive to pay off the building debt had raised $12,546.

The minister and the clerk of the session were authorized to sign a note for $600 at the First National Bank to pay for repairs to the roof and for drainage to the basement. (Sept. 9). Shortly thereafter it was voted necessary to repair the stained glass windows and the plastering in the "foyers".

Twenty new members were added to the church rolls at the end of the year.

1930

It was moved at the congregational meeting to "use as much as needed" of the $2000, left by Mrs. W. H. Waggoner, to rebuild the glass stained windows, as a memorial to Mrs. Waggoner, (April 2).

After considerable discussion, it was voted at a session meeting (May 12) to have no Sunday evening services during the months of June and July and no services either morning or evening for the month of August. In addition, the minister was granted an extra Sunday for his vacation.

At the next meeting the session received the announcement that the pastor, C. E. Goddard was expecting a call from the Community Church of Winnetka, Illinois and that he wished to tender his resignation to a congregational meeting on June 29.

On this date the resignation was accepted.

The first picnic to be mentioned in the records was approved at a session meeting on August 11, the place—the Andrew Drumm Farm —time August 24.

"On motion, it was voted that the House Committee of the Board of Deacons, be asked to see that the basement and the West room upstairs be cleaned before "Fire Prevention Week' when all public buildings will be inspected" (Oct. 13).

CALL TO DR. ROY. W. ZIMMER

1931

A call was given to Dr. Roy W. Zimmer, Overland Park, Kansas to become pastor at a salary of $3000 with $600 for the manse and a pension payment equal to 7½ per cent of his salary (Feb. 8).

A vote to merge the Board of Elders with the Board of Deacons into a single body was carried at the congregational meeting held April 1st. It was also voted to enlarge this board to a membership of 18.

Not long after a committee was appointed to organize a Board of Trustees, to carry the title of the church.

The choir had become dissatisfied with their director, according to the report of the committee on Worship, which was instructed to hire a new director at a salary of $35 per month (June 1).

1932

This year the great depression was being felt. At the congregational meeting of April 6 it was found necessary to decrease the budget to $7860. The choir director was dispensed with entirely.

One bright spot was that the membership was holding up with a total of 578 and a Sunday School averaging 257.

Another grim evidence of the depression was the fact that the "Independence Cottage" owned by the church and used by the young people and other groups when attending conferences at Hollister was "sold for taxes". (Aug. 1)

On October 3, the session authorized the Finance Committee to apply $800 from the Waggoner fund on the deficit of the previous year and to put on a campaign to raise the balance of $600 still due.

A letter from Dr. Baity of Westport, asked that something be done by the churches to meet the tax payments on the "Presbyterian Hill" church property which included the dining hall and numerous cottages. (The entire hill was eventually foreclosed).

1933

In 1933 the finances of the church reached a "low" not equalled in a generation. The pastor's salary was reduced voluntarily to $2700, the manse allowance to $36. The budget total was $6600 and strangely the pledges exceed this amount by $200. (April 3).

1934

A net gain in church membership was reported at the April 3rd congregational meeting held April 3rd. Times were slightly better, the pastor's salary was raised to $3060 and the budget $7100.

A letter from Dr. George H. Mack, President of Missouri Valley College, read in session meeting proposes to confer the degree of Doctor of Divinity on the pastor. It was unnanimously agreed that Dr. Zimmer accept this honor. (He had previously received a degree while studying at Edinburgh, Scotland May 3).

In December attention is again called to the fact that the church was faced with a deficit. It was voted to ask each member to contribute an amount equal to ten per cent of their original pledge.

1935

Quite a bit of legal language, to the extent of five typewritten pages, appears in the records covering the congregational meeting, beginning the new church year. For some months formalities had been underway leading to the incorporation of the church and its property. Copies of the ruling of the Missouri Department of State, and the proceedings of the circuit court of Jackson County, granting the church's request, originally suggested by Presbytery are on file.

The new church year began with only a slight increase in membership—561 and a proposed budget of $7000.

1935

At the regular session meeting on Sept. 13, Dr. Roy W. Zimmer gave a report on the steps leading up to his receiving a call to the First Presbyterian Church of Topeka, Kansas, and requested the session to call a congregational meeting for the purpose of accepting his resignation. The meeting was called for Sept. 22, and his resignation accepted with genuine regret.

DR. WALTER L. CLARK TO FIRST CHURCH

1936

By a vote of 113 to one, Dr. Walter L. Clark of the West Side Presbyterian Church, Wichita Kansas, was chosen as the new pastor. He was installed on April 24. At this same meeting a vote of thanks was given Dr. C. C. McGinley for his services "ad interim".

1937

A report by the financial committee at the annual congregational meeting, recommends an increase in the budget from $5800 to $7040, with the minister's salary at $2700, a total of $9890. It was finally reduced to $6500.

The Sawyer Memorial Chimes were formally dedicated at the morning services of Dec. 19th. They had been presented to the church in the will of Mrs. Sallie Woodson Sawyer, who had for a number of years been the oldest member of the church, and were in memory of her husband the late Aaron Flint Sawyer. They consist of six bells, weighing 350 to 1500 pounds each, and are turned for musical chorals.

The old bell which was replaced by the chimes, was presented to the Raytown Christian Church. This bell had called worshippers to service since the erection of the present building in 1887 and previously had called the worshippers to the former church which stood at Osage and Lexington Streets. Tradition has it that it was salvaged from a steamboat wrecked on the Missouri river.

1938

A decision to re-establish a board of deacons and a board of trustees replacing the one board system was voted at the annual congregational meeting March 9th. For a number of years previously, the entire management of the church was left to the committees appointed by the session. An every member canvass had been held and a report stated that pledges had reached $6000 for the $6700 budget. Membership reported, 600.

The death of Mrs. Jane Christy Knox age 99½ years is recorded in the session minutes of Nov. 7. Mention is also made of the mission work of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Peters at that time in Guatemala.

1939

One of the rare occasions when the church has taken any official notice of outside affairs is in a motion instructing the clerk of the session to write Judge Allen C. Southern expressing approval and pride in his move to clean up organized crime in Jackson County. (Feb. 6). It is a matter of history that the Judge's courageous action started the movement which eventually ended the control of the Pendergast organization in the civic affairs of Kansas City and Jackson County.

The deficit for the previous year, reported at the annual congregational meeting $510. Membership 611 (Mar. 6).

A special congregational meeting voted that the sum of $210 a year be added to Foreign Missions toward the support of Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Harry Peters in Guatemala. (Nov. 29).

1940

"Most outstanding" of the years achievements, the organization of the men's club. The group is reported to be growing and becoming an "integral part of the Church".

A motion recommended by the music committee, raised the pay of the choir director from $10 to $15 per month. The organist's salary $25. (April 17).

1941

As the interior of the church was badly in need of redecorating and the budget was inadequate, the session authorized the raising of the amount needed by calling on 30 members result $1410. (Feb. 3).

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF CHURCH OBSERVED

The One Hundreth anniversary was celebrated with a special service, following a dinner on Wednesday April 2. A special song service followed the dinner and preceded the annual business meeting. An increase in membership to 637 was reported—Sunday School average 319, including teachers. The pledges exceeded the budget by five dollars totalling $6685. A special fund was raised to repair the roof on the educational building. Repairs on the Rose Windows were paid for by the Women's Association.

Later in the year, an anniversary banquet was held which was followed by an elaborate musical program in which songs of the different periods were sung, and a review of the Church's history by a former pastor, Dr. Roy W. Zimmer was given (Nov. 21).

1942

A new high in membership reported at the annual congregational meeting, had been reached with a total of 701, a gain of some 60 over the previous year.

By adding together the various sums of interest accrued by the different funds, the church debt of nearly 20 years standing was finally paid off.

After a ministry of six and one-half years the pastor, Dr. Walter O. Clark, accepted a call to the First Presbyterian Church of Wausau, Wisconsin, which was confirmed by Presbytery, as of August 31.

Once again Dr. C. C. McGinley was requested by the session to serve as moderator and pastor "so far as his strength permitted" until the employment of a new minister. (Sept. 6).

The pulpit supply committee recommended that a call be made to Dr. Ray H. Turner, Norfolk, Nebraska to fill the existing vacancy. He was elected by the unanimous vote of the 154 members present at the morning service (Nov. 1). On December 13, he was formally installed.

1628925

1943

A full time assistant to the pastor, Miss Edna Reeder was employed. (Mar. 15). This was apparently the first time that anyone other than in office work had been employed.

1944

After a pastorate of slightly more than one and one half years, Dr. Ray H. Turner asked that his services be terminated on June 6, 1944 in order that he might join the armed services, in the capacity of chaplain. Dr. C. C. McGinley was again elected "intermim pastor" to serve until the pulpit vacancy was filled.

THE REV. JAY M. LOGAN ACCEPTS CALL

On Oct. 15, a call suggested by the pulpit committee and endorsed at a congregational meeting was sent to the Rev. Jay M. Logan of Missouri Valley, Iowa. A salary of $3000 and manse is mentioned. Mr. Logan had served at the Iowa church for the two previous years and began his work at Independence on December 3rd.

1945

Outstanding among the achievements of this year was the organization of the Westminster Youth Church which began with an enrollment of 65 boys and girls.

The sum of $250 was sent to the American Bible Society for the purpose of sending bibles to the war torn countries.

1946

At a special meeting of the session it was voted to give the pastor a six months leave of absence on a partial salary (Nov. 6). This apparently was never carried out.

1947

Another missionary was added to the list when at the annual congregational meeting, the name of the Rev. George Walker, of the Cook County Christian Training School, Phoenix, was added to the list of those sponsored by the church in the mission field. (April 16).

Architects were hired to prepare plans for increasing the seating capacity of the church by remodeling the building. (Oct. 17).

1948

A pastorate of three and one half years was ended by Mr. Logan when he preached his final sermon on June 27. Previously on June 6th a sermon had been preached by the Rev. Paul M. Bischoff, of Springfield, Ill. Following the sermon he was accepted at a congregational meeting by a vote of 282 to one.

In a letter from the session thanking Mr. Logan for his services it is noted that under his pastorate the membership had increased from 726 to 894, Sunday school attendance from 173 to 300, and the budget from $10,000 to $16,000.

1949

A nursery to be in charge of a nurse, was decided upon, to be underwritten by the Women's Association and the Trustees (Mar. 2).

MARKED INCREASE IN MEMBERSHIP

In the new budget the pastor's salary was raised from $4500 to $5000 (May 27). A marked increase in the attendance is noted and a committee appointed to consider plans to accommodate the growth of the church, either by remodeling of the then present facilities, the establishment of a new mission church or the construction of a new church building. At this time it was also decided to place more comfortable seats in the balcony and to lay a new floor and install sliding partitions in the church dining room.

1950

Church membership for the preceding year had reached a total of 897 a gain of 43. The annual budget was to be $24,273.

The committee on the church's future plans, requested Presbytery to buy a lot on Sheley Road the proposed site of a new church to be established as a branch of First Church. (Mar 20).

The sum of $10,000 was voted for the various improvements in First Church. (Feb. 26.)

1951

The annual church dinner and business meeting is now being held at the beginning of the calendar year, instead of after the first of March. At this meeting a budget of $20,000 was voted.

Work on the organizing of a new church (Trinity) was initiated with the appointment of a committee to consult with all members of First Church who lived south of Twenty-third St. for the purpose of joining and aiding this new enterprise. (Feb. 7).

A formal motion was unanimously carried at a special congregational meeting on May 16, confirming plans for the erection of a "new church on Sheley Road near Crysler".

1952

A call was extended to J. Wallace Carlson, United Presbyterian Church, South Chicago, Ill. to begin work as assistant pastor at a date not later than May 1. The purpose in hiring Mr. Carlson was that he might begin the work of organizing the new church. (Jan. 2). Sunday School attendance averaged 368 for the month of January, that of the church service 412.

By April 9th, the number of charter members for the new church had reached 102, with pledges totaling $43,000. The formal organization was completed April 3. The transfer of memberships from the First Church to the Trinity Presbyterian Church, of 102 members, was made on December 17.

1953

The sum of $60,000 was received and accepted from the Marguerite S. Davis Trust, to be divided between the First and Trinity churches. The amount received by First Church was used to extend the chancel to the west and remodel the organ. (Jan. 11).

A budget of $30,482.99 was adopted (Jan. 14).

Mrs. William Weaverling was upon recommendation of the committee on Christian Education, employed to begin work on August 1, as Director of Religious Education. (June 17).

1954

The new year began with an average attendance for 1953 given as 338. That for Trinity Presbyterian, one year old, 101.

A legacy of $1.000 in memory of Mr. and Mrs. H. J. Ott to be used for choir and music expenses is reported by the trustees. (Jan. 6).

After a pastorate of six years, the Rev. Paul S. Bischoff reports having received a call to the First Presbyterian Church of Arkansas City, Kansas and asks that his resignation be accepted to take effect Sept. 8th (Aug. 8).

Mr. Vincent Robbins was hired as an organist (Sept. 7).

THE REV. REUEL JOHNSON BECAME PASTOR

A report from the nominating committee, to a congregational meeting held on Oct. 24, reports that they have selected the Rev. Reuel E. Johnson to fill the pulpit vacancy.

1955

A budget of $30,596 with benevolences of $4,669 was adopted at the annual congregational meeting held on January 19th. Average attendance for the previous year was given as 391 for the church service and 362 for the Sunday School.

A proposal by Mrs. W. M. Spencer to set up a loan fund to be used for the education of young people preparing for Christian service, is outlined in a letter to the session (May 9).

1956

At the annual congregational meeting held on Jan. 19th a budget of $46,154 was voted.

A resolution of the session gives permission for the Westminster Fellowship Group to hold a monthly recreational program in the Social Hall. (Mar. 12).

A joint meeting of the three boards held with the Building and Finance committee reported plans for the purchase of a new building to cost from $180,000 to $210,000. They also recommended the employment of the Wells Organization for conducting the financing program. (Oct. 23).

1957

Termination of the recently signed contract with the Wells Organization was voted at the first meeting of the session on Jan. 14.

A yearly envelope collection for the next three years, to be used in aiding Missouri Valley College in their capital Funds campaign was unanimously voted. (April 1).

By a written ballot at a congregational meeting, it was voted to accept the contract between the Jackson County Realty Co., and the First Presbyterian Church for the purchase of the building across the street formerly occupied by the Kroger Grocery Co. (Nov. 17).

1958

No amount is mentioned in the report of the adoption of the annual budget presented at the congregational meeting of Jan. 16.

A sum "not to exceed $6,000" was voted for the purpose of remodeling the manse. (June 12).

1959

A Benevolence report for the year just passed was presented at the first session meeting of the new year—total amount disbursed, $5,692. (Jan. 5).

The newly acquired building across the street was officially named Westminster Hall by vote of the session. (April 6).

A resolution commending the prayer telephone which had been in service two years was passed unanimously by the session. (Sept. 14).

Approval of the moving of the Junior High Department to Westminster Hall was voted on October 25.

The Parking Committee was authorized to establish a commission to regulate Sunday parking on the parking lot. (Oct. 5).

A memorial gift in the form of a paved parking space north of the church, in memory of Mr. and Mrs. William M. Spencer was acknowledged with appreciation by the session. (Nov. 2).

1960

A chain to be installed at both ends of the parking lot was voted at the first session meeting of the new year. It was to have a suitable sign attached.

A vote of thanks to Mr. Kuehnl for a $300 memorial gift to be used for the purchase of a worship center in Westminster Hall, was tendered in a resolution by the session. At the same meeting the Turner Music Company is thanked in a resolution, acknowledging the gift of a small organ for the same building.

An amendment to place the 1960 budget at $48,000 was adopted. (Jan. 4).

A standing vote of thanks was given Mr. Edward Hare at the annual congregational meeting in appreciation of the work under his supervision, by some 90 men of the church who have done approximately $12,500 worth of remodeling at an actual cost of only $3500. (Jan. 21).

Letters from the Stanton R. Wilsons and the Kelmore Spencers, both missionaries in Korea, and in part being supported by this church, were read at the session meeting. (Feb. 1).

New robes for the choir as memorial gift in memory of Mrs. Frank McKee were announced by the music committee. (Nov. 7).

So, January first, 1961, finds the little church which started in the frontier, log cabin town "farthest west" now, 140 years later with a membership of more than one thousand, still working for the furtherance of Christ's Kingdom in a troubled world.

3 344